# LUTHERAN EDUCATION

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# Lutheran Education

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# Here I Sit...Waiting to be Served

by O. John Zillman

I like to eat at restaurants because that's where someone else serves me. That leaves out a lot of fast food franchises. That arrangement may have helped Ray Kroc change the diet of America, but it gets tiresome. I like to have a choice of what I want to eat, say how I'd like it cooked, have it brought to me and, when I'm done, have someone else cheerily pick up after me.

I can't say that I have a single favorite place to eat although, through the years, there are certainly some places I've been to which I'd never return. Some of the best experiences, though, have taken me off the beaten path. When we used to go on those long "Are we there yet?" driving vacations when the daughters were young, we'd stop after a five or six hundred mile day, check into a chain motel, then ask at the front desk, "When *you* go out to eat, where do *you* go?" We might have to endure another ten miles there and back, but an out of the way diner, ethnic or uniquely regional restaurant – even a good burger joint or bar and grill was always more intriguing than the franchise eateries that sprout ubiquitously around interstate exits.

On the way back from the east coast, somewhere near Hartford, CN, we asked that very question and, twenty minutes and several rural intersections later, found ourselves in an Italian restaurant that looked like an absolute dump from the outside. On the inside, though, the place was authentically quaint with red-checked tablecloths, a collection of eclectic but sturdy tables and chairs, a young and cheery wait staff and an aroma of garlic bread that was a sensory delight. I ordered linguine and clam sauce (those days are over) and when it came to the table, it was served in what looked like a mixing bowl. A medium sized mixing bowl.

"Wait. I'm the only one who ordered this."

"This is your order, sir."

"Oh my..."

Since we were on the road, there was no way to take the leftovers with us and since Mom always said it was a

sin to waste food, I dug in like a champ. I was afraid I'd have to switch to husky-size pants after that one.

(I should never write editorials about food at four-thirty in the afternoon.)

Serving others, I'd submit, is really valid only when it costs the server something but the waitress or waiter in the restaurant, whether cheerful or somewhat inattentive, usually gets a tip, although I'm getting to the age where I don't really like to be called, "You guys" no matter how perkily expressed. "So, are you guys ready to order?" Only do the dour, surly and arrogantly indifferent not receive their due 15% of the tab. Waiting tables is tough work. Pouring steaming coffee accurately from two feet above the cup is a real talent and I can't see how anyone can balance four or five hot breakfast platters on their arm, day after day and smile. I suppose that chronically burned arms makes a person chronically crabby over time – but I always over-tip at breakfast since the tab is relatively small.

I have found that the "Service Department" of automobile dealers can vary quite a bit in whether or not those who work there actually read that sign on the door when they come in to the shop each day. There are several variables in this, I think, first, whether they consider that the service is rendered to the *customer* for repairs, inspections and maintenance that they do, as in, "Would you like to have it washed when we're finished?" or whether the word is used as verb that refers to the work they do on the *car*, as in, "Well, Mr. Zillman, we serviced your emission control system." The latter use of the term is easier for them as the car doesn't talk back if it's not happy. Second, I've noticed that service to the customer, including the car washes, shifts to servicing the car just about the time that the warranty expires. But there are some places where things get done right and the people are concerned about whether the repair holds up or will cut you some slack on your warranty if something unexpectedly falls off at 36,473 miles.

**Serving others…is really valid only when it costs the server something…**

I'd never want to work in the "Customer Service" department of a retail business. It's really a euphemism for "The Complaint and/or Returning the Stuff That Doesn't Fit or Work Right Department." It is usually a counter in an out of the way part of the store behind which are

bins and shelves for collecting the merchandise that comes in. Part of the "service" in some big box electronics stores now includes a "re-stocking" fee, in other words, if I buy something that doesn't live up to my expectations based on what the manufacturer said it would do, I have to pay 15% of the cost of the item to give it back, unused. This doesn't seem right.

When we were newly graduated and newly wed, we had the opportunity to live in an above-the-garage apartment in one of the beautiful homes that surround Concordia's campus, but after talking with the prospective landlords, we found that the next-to-nothing-Lutheran-teacher-affordable rent was made up by the expectation that we would be required to serve at the owners' social functions on a regular basis. Very nice, generous people and a very nice place but – nope - not for me. I had a *college degree*, after all. I was going into Professional Church Work and setting up tables and chairs and cleaning up after other people wasn't what I wanted to do. Little did I know. I wish I had a nickel for every table and chair I've set up and taken down in thirty-two years.

When I taught fifth graders, we were still using the old CPH "Mission: Life" religion curriculum. The first memory verse for the year was, Mark 10: 45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served; he came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." That would get things off to a fairly easy start except for one class in which I had a student with the surname of Ransom. The assignment, of course, provoked widespread amusement among his classmates and, as religion was the first subject of the day, it just went on and on. He was somewhat bothered by this until I pointed out that, not only was his name in the Bible but also, since we did memory work in written form, everyone in class – including his buddies – was going to have to learn how to spell it correctly. He was happier after that. Once we got past what passes for humor among ten-year-old boys, we could get on with the meaning of the verse. The kids memorized the passage and we talked it out in terms of the prescribed lesson, but I'm not sure after all these years, what meaning it held for them. Which kind of service? The kind you give or the kind you expect to receive?

Service learning as part of programs in schools or in congregations, zeroes in on the impact point of giving of oneself but in a way that carefully acknowledges the values in the community in which it occurs, that there are stories and social meanings that the "server"- who is not part of the community – might not understand at first. Working through that

part of the experience is as valuable as whatever work was done. A day at a homeless shelter, a mission trip to Mexico, a Habitat for Humanity project in a local community, rehabbing a house in Appalachia or cleaning up from Katrina are all experiences remembered long after the project is done. Walking the line between naïve intrusion and genuine get-down-to-it dirty work is difficult to monitor and takes some careful reflection on the part of instructors. This is truly "guide by the side" teaching. It is life-changing for both parties.

Service, freely offered, is something that sometimes takes others by surprise. Our human nature causes us to hesitate, to choose not to become involved or draw the line at a point where we can rightfully say, "They don't pay me enough for this." That's not the point. When God's people serve others without concern about "what's in it for me" they often find that something does come back their way, if nothing else, the tears of gratitude in the eyes of a poor Mexican woman whose small house wears a fresh coat of paint, courtesy of a bunch of Lutheran high school students, some of whom have probably never held a paint roller at home. That the "house" they just painted is about the size of their own bedroom isn't lost on them. The lesson in that is that there are ways to make the world a kinder place, regardless of the constant clamor and self-serving arguments and agendas. The world is about "This is mine; go find your own." Christian service is about "We are His; we'll help care for what you have and leave some of our own with you." Mexican village, Mississippi delta or the road to Jericho: the location doesn't matter much.

In this issue of the *Journal*, Alannah Ari Hernandez, Director of Academic Service Learning at Concordia University Chicago gives the reader an idea of the framework and place of service learning at the university level. The primary reason for having invited this article was to offer it to Lutheran educators as an example of how service learning programs at earlier educational levels might look when extended into Lutheran higher education. Preparing young people for service – whatever their vocation – can be a common thread all the way through their childhood and youth and is consistent with the Church's time-honored definition of stewardship: contribution of time, talent or treasure.

People who become Lutheran educators serve – not because there's something in it for us – the salary scales are evidence of this; not because of what we see that passes for service in business – although good business people serve their customers well because they like them; and proba-

bly not because they completed a memory assignment in the fifth grade. We do it because we saw someone else do it, that person – a parent, grandparent, a teacher, pastor or mentor – invited us to be a part of it and then let the experience just sort of germinate with some careful tending. I'm guessing that all of us can tell the story of how it happened in our own formative years. Those amazing things still happen in the lives of Concordia students every day on this campus: Service Learning is one important way to plant and tend the seed. And then we send 'em out to you, ready to help in your harvest.

Well, in retrospect, I guess I won't be too hard on the next enthusiastic young restaurant server when asked, "Are you guys ready to order?" The tip-o-meter should be tuned more to the willing spirit than the age-appropriate salutation. After all, there will come a day when, while nodding toward me, they'll ask my wife, "And what does *he* want?" and I'll wonder what I was being so fussy about years ago. Maybe I'll spend some time thinking about that over a nice big bowl of linguine. ***LEJ***

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# The Door of the Future Has a New Set of Keys: Service Learning at Concordia University Chicago

by Alannah Ari Hernandez

Here, at Concordia University-Chicago, in River Forest, we are delighted to be in the process of establishing and growing our very own Service Learning program. CUC opened its doors to a full time Academic Service Learning Center with a full time director in July of 2007. Service Learning is a movement within higher education that is here to stay; the fact that CUC now has its own Academic Service Learning Center demonstrates the university's commitment to enhancing the educational journey of its students.

So, what is it…? Service Learning started out as a critique of higher education by those within the system itself who were aware that the traditional educational process very often did not prepare students for life outside and beyond the classroom. For many years, education was treated as a mere transference of knowledge in which the professor was the active agent providing valuable information and the student was the passive empty vessel, waiting to be filled with the academic knowledge he/she lacked. Within this type of system, professors were often seen and treated as superior to the students on the basis of their higher degree of education. The students, on the other hand, were looked upon as blank pages for the educators to fill, or sadly, looked down upon for their lack of experience and knowledge. Surely, many of us who traversed college and graduate school have found ourselves, at one time or another, in such attitudinal situations.

The reality of educational processes is a bit more complicated than that. We know that students are neither blank slates, nor are they inherently inferior intellectual beings. What often gets in their way is the lack of experience that goes hand in hand with youth. This is precisely what these educators identified as one of the main problems within the system. They were able to see that the traditional environment failed to provide certain types of experience needed for intellectual, personal, as well as professional development. Instead, what was often seen in traditional academic environments were students who acquired a repertoire of informa-

tion that was still abstract to them which they stored intellectually, largely through memorization, to be "regurgitated" on exams later on. Those of us who teach know the syndrome very well. And, much to our chagrin, those very same students who had spent hours in our classroom and hours memorizing the material, could not employ the knowledge learned when faced with real life situations. In other words, the students studied the theoretical aspect, but when the time came to put the theory into action, they were unable to do so. Obviously, something valuable was not taking place. For those perceptive educators who identified the situation, it was obvious something needed to change. Since 1989, many colleges and universities have embarked on the road to promoting student engagement in all its aspects: one of those aspects is Service Learning.

**Origins of Service Learning**

One recurrent problem that educators, administrators, and employers identified within the population of recent college graduates was that they had deficiencies in two very specific areas: empirical experience tied to their major, as well as overall skills in the "world of work." Although many had wonderful academic credentials, the fact that they lacked experience prevented them from being viewed as attractive potential employees. These college graduates would often hear comments such as, "You have great college credentials, but you lack experience." Students found themselves in a cycle of frustration that kept them from being employed due to lack of experience but also prevented them from getting the experience by finding employment. The belief of many contemporary, potential employers is that by the time students graduate from college they *should* have experience in the work world. It is because of this quandary that the critique of the status quo within the traditional higher education system came about. Educators who were aware of the situation encountered by many students after graduation came up with alternatives and solutions to improve the overall quality of their students' academic careers. Service Learning was among the solutions, allowing students to acquire experience through the service they would provide, developing skills that were transferable to the work world as well as having explored employment opportunities outside their own majors or minors. Memorizing "regurgitate-able" information was no longer enough.

Awareness of the fact that the traditional educational processes did not always prepare students for real life, the real world and for jobs beyond the classroom led to the birth of Service Learning; A particular educational philosophy and pedagogy which, in itself, was both new and old.

The "newness" begins in 1989 with the publication of both *Principles of Good Practice in Combining Service and Learning,* by Honnet and Poulsen and *Combining Service and Learning* by J.C. Kendall. All of the recent definitions of what Service Learning are based on the principles presented by Honnet and Poulsen in their text. They posit that when hands-on service is combined with classroom learning, both aspects – service and learning – acquire significant value and both actions are transformed into a deeply enriching experience. Combining academic material with a service experience in which the student actually practices what is being learned in class leads to a new way of knowing what they learn. It also offers a space for the student to grow personally, and, hopefully, develop a sense of purpose and an approach to community based on a broader social vision, as well as preparing them for life outside the classroom. In other words, it's a win-win situation.

Service Learning values both types of experiences, the intellectual and the theoretical in both the classroom as well as in the experiential service location. This is where Service Learning shows its "old" roots, those tied to experiential learning and which were originally developed in the work of John Dewey. Dewey believed that the process of learning occurs in a type of cycle in which there is action – the learner *does* – followed by reflection – the learner *thinks* about what he/she has done. The process of internalizing knowledge does not occur solely through reading and attending lectures. The best way for a learner to internalize knowledge is for him/her to use it to solve problems within a specific context where the knowledge can be applied as a problem solving tool.

**Service Learning, as a philosophy and as pedagogy, values knowledge in all its forms, academic as well as experiential.**

Service Learning, as a philosophy and as pedagogy, values knowledge in all its forms, academic as well as experiential. The traditional higher education system did not, for it regarded that which transpired in the classroom as superior to activities outside the classroom. To combine these two, the world of higher education has found value in reaching out into its surrounding community to create relationships and partnerships where the students can grow and thrive. The core premise of this pedagogy is that the combination of these two contexts works together towards the overall improvement of human welfare, not just the educational experience of the students. One of the major goals of Service

Learning, then, is as a tool to promote civic engagement within the student body by creating opportunities for responsible and active engagement of individuals in a democratic society. Getting students involved in the community at an early stage will create people who will become actively aware, based on their first hand experience, of how things function – or do not function – in our society. The biggest hope and main goal is that this aware engagement will create in them a lifelong desire to stay civically connected and active.

In other words, if we return to our initial question – what is Service Learning – we can confidently state that it is an important pedagogical tool that allows students to practice what they learn in the classroom, by providing the real life and hands-on experience required to internalize the concepts being taught and studied. Service Learning activities need not be monumental endeavors; they simply need to be related to some of the topics, or the general content of the course in a way that is clear to the student. The most important aspect of this new approach towards education is that, by providing service within their community, students will enhance their own learning process as well as to help meet the diverse needs that exist around them in their communities.

**Key Components of Service Learning Programs**

For Service Learning to succeed requires collaboration between institutions of higher education and partners in the community. Initiating a Service Learning program typically requires a commitment from a core group, typically a handful of professors, who have encountered the concept of Service Learning and concur with the philosophical and educational precepts presented by this pedagogy. Thus, the first step is to believe in what Service Learning is and can do for students. These professors are usually educators who view and care about their students in a holistic fashion and who want their students to succeed in their classes and beyond, out there in the great big world, once they graduate.

The second step is to decide which course or courses can accommodate a Service Learning component and then look for a partnership that would allow the students to give service in a location where they can practice what they are learning. The Service Learning experience need not be overwhelming, nor does it have to relate to every single concept taught or learned in the classroom. There are times when this simply is not possible. But it is possible to relate one, two, several, or many of the concepts taught to the service given. In reality, Service Learning is implementable in every discipline, but it need not exist in every course offered

or required in a degree program.

A third component that is mandatory for a positive Service Learning experience and program is a reflection tool that will further develop the thinking process. The simplest of these is asking the students to keep a journal. Critical thinking does not occur without reflection: the thought, patience and work involved in effective reflection cannot be overemphasized. More precisely, the "work" involved here is conscientious thinking about the service that is being given. The students must be required to give consideration to things like the location, the population, the type of service and the effects of it in the community, their own emotions during service experiences, the difference they make in the clients' lives and the changes they, themselves, undergo. Students must also document what they see and feel in their journaling as a way of connecting their innermost feelings and reactions toward the service location and the cultural group they work with.

The most important requirement for the journal to be a successful tool is that the student is honest in their entries and that the writing experience occurs immediately after each service experience. As the students journal they become aware of many pre-service beliefs and they also document how many of those beliefs may be challenged or are transformed. For the Service Learning experience to be truly beneficial, students are required to work with a cultural group that is different from their own and which will require them to step out of their comfort zone. The definition of cultural group may encompass an extremely diverse set of populations. Groups that are culturally different from that of the student may be people of different races and/or ethnic groups, different ages – such as children and senior citizens; people of different socio-economic status and social class; different religious denominations; different genders and sexual orientation and of diverse physical and mental abilities, this last allowing the student to work with individuals with disabilities.

At Concordia University-Chicago some of the students who participate in Service Learning engage in service with children who are of a different race and ethnicity, who come from economically disadvantaged communities, as well as with children from middle class communities. By engaging with children, they engage with a different culture based on the particular worldview of those of another age range. Others work with the homeless population, where they not only encounter people of a different socio-economic standing but also of multiple races and ethnicities. There are students that work with a Catholic organization that provides

services to a population that has physical and mental disabilities. By doing this they may be working with a different denomination as well as with people who are different from them in terms of their abilities. We also have students who serve at a "wrap-around" social work agency that provides services to AIDS patients who are too sick to work, who tend to be primarily, but not exclusively male. Every single one of these service experiences require that the Concordia students step out of their comfort zone and engage with God's "diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world" as asserted in Concordia University's mission statement.

**Implementing Service Learning in the Curriculum**

Those of us not new to Service Learning are aware of the multiple options when it comes to developing Service Learning opportunities for our students. The very best option will always be what is called *curricular* Service Learning. This type of Service Learning component is designed and used to meet course objectives and to practice theoretical elements presented in the classroom. A curricular Service Learning opportunity allows the students to practice the theories presented via class lectures *abstractly* while they are providing service *concretely* at their service location. This opportunity requires that the students apply what they are actively trying to acquire in the classroom in a valuable way as they go about meeting the needs of the community where they serve. They not only receive college credit for their service in the community, they also acquire the experience they will need once they go into the real world and apply for jobs.

Developing a curriculum with multiple opportunities for curricular Service Learning requires a specific environment and faculty. Although Service Learning is a steadily growing trend, this does not mean that all institutions of higher education find themselves ready or willing to embrace it. Incorporating Service Learning does require a willingness to modify courses to incorporate a service component. Surprisingly, modifying a course to incorporate a Service Learning component is not really an elaborate process: at most, it usually it requires a bit of "tweaking."

A second way of adding Service Learning is by creating *co-curricular* projects. This type of Service Learning project is not integrated to a particular course, but is related to the student's major or minor, and is a wonderful option for students who desire to serve but who are in majors/minors that do not have Service Learning courses. This option is offered through a Service Learning Program or Center and its director or

coordinator who is a professional staff member. This director oversees placing the student at an agency, implements an appropriate reflection tool and then monitors and evaluates the student's service experience. The idea here is that the Service Learning Center is charged with the creation of community partnerships or for helping students develop their own partnerships. In this type project, the student usually receives some type of recognition on his/her academic transcript that he/she has engaged in Service-Learning. Concordia University is purposefully working on the development and construction of an "involvement and engagement transcript," on which all of the student's service hours will be documented and which the student can obtain and use when he/she is applying for employment.

A third option is *add-on* Service Learning Projects. This model is considered curricular, but it is not an integral part of any particular course as it is actually initiated by the student. The student approaches and contracts with a faculty member to do a significant number of service hours in an area which is of interest to the student. This is highly advantageous for the students, as they do not need to wait for the professor to provide a service-learning component to a course. It is also another good option for students in departments that have not (yet) developed a service-learning course. With this option, the student usually needs to find a service location that relates to the content of the course, but in the particular situation at CUC, the student can definitely count on receiving help and support from the director of the Academic Service Learning Center and thus would not be required to do all the footwork on his/her own. This is possible due to the fact that Concordia now has a full time director who can assist both the students and the faculty in any Service Learning endeavor. The service hours completed by the student would be documented on his/her involvement and engagement transcript, just like all the other students. The student in an add-on experience would also be required to keep a proper reflection journal and would need to be able to demonstrate the specific learning taking place in service site.

All of the students, regardless of the type of Service Learning they engage in, must complete a service contract with the professor and/or with the staff of the Service-Learning center.

**Benefits of Service Learning**

One major benefit of engaging in Service Learning is that it allows the individual to acquire experience without the formality of a job. For students who have very demanding majors or for those who do not want

to work during their college year, one or two semesters of Service Learning would work splendidly. Requiring a Service Learning component ensures that they attain experiences that will empower them later. We faculty and administrators do this when we create these opportunities for them which, in turn, lead to developing the skills needed when they enter the work force at the end of their academic careers.

Just recently, in the fall of 2007, I met a graduate student after I had given a presentation on Service Learning and these very specific practical and utilitarian benefits. After my presentation, the young lady came up to me and said, "I had that exact same problem when I finished my undergraduate degree. I had several job interviews and did not get hired because I did not have any experience. I got discouraged and decided to apply to Graduate School, so I wouldn't be unemployed." She was delighted to learn that the graduate course she was taking offered Service Learning as an option for her to attain experience which – as she had learned the hard way – she desperately needed.

What all studies show is that Service Learning not only allows students to obtain empirical experience, it also helps them on the road to developing higher order thinking skills. When students find themselves in their service location they are often required to use or develop many skills such as leadership, problem solving, observation, deduction, induction and creativity. Studies also indicate that students who participated in Service Learning projects liked it because it allowed them to connect things about which they were passionate directly to their learning processes, and they enjoy and benefit from connecting the personal with the intellectual. Also, it systematically deepens their overall understanding of how the world works – or doesn't – by exposing them to the root causes of the need for service to begin with. It allows them to clearly comprehend why their service in the community is needed which, in turn, transforms them into civically engaged citizens. Oftentimes, their direct service work in an agency strongly develops their sense of empathy with the people whom they serve. The development of empathy, along with the understanding of injustices also strengthens their sense of civic engagement.

**By engaging in service with the citizens of God's world all students develop their interpersonal skills…**

**Service Learning and Mission**

In addition to its strictly utilitarian benefits mentioned, Service

Learning provides the students with the opportunity to explore careers in service which they might have never considered before. When students engage in Service Learning in a field that is outside their desired or intended program of study, it stimulates their curiosity and, at the same time, provides the context and the experience necessary to satisfy that curiosity.

It is not difficult to see how Service Learning benefits our students academically and in the area of skills development. There is, however, another area where our students capabilities are greatly enhanced, that is in the area of moral development, specifically development of an individual's moral capacity or moral agency. As Christian citizens of the world, as well as of a democratic society, this is an area that is very important to us as we strive to be moral and ethical beings in spite of our fallen nature.

There are many issues that our students must be exposed to as they travel the road of Service Learning towards that major goal, which we will call a moral and ethical identity. One extremely important issue they must come into contact with is that of human diversity. Service Learning purposefully strives to introduce and expose students to human and social differences such as race and ethnicity, physical and mental abilities and disabilities, religious beliefs, age and generational differences, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and gender. By participating in service opportunities that expose them to the multiplicity of human diversity our students develop tolerance and empathy which, in turn, leads to the reduction of stereotypes and to the appreciation and respect of cultures outside their own. By being exposed to and interacting with people of other cultures, our students acquire a deeper sense of self-knowledge and also experience spiritual and personal growth.

By engaging in service with the citizens of God's world all students develop their interpersonal skills as working with others requires cooperation and, by providing needed services for an agency, they develop and enhance their sense of personal efficacy and their self-confidence which then allows for the development of leadership skills. Our goal, at the very end of the road, is to have them feel like they are empowered citizens, capable of creating positive and constructive change in God's world.

Service Learning is an ideological stance that strives to develop students' appreciation of human differences and to help colleges and universities become educational spaces that create democratic citizens with developed thinking skills, who want to engage with their community, to directly address the human needs that exist in it, and to specifically bring

about positive social change. While this is the secular, academic Service Learning goal, it couldn't be more compatible with our Christian university goal.

Our Mission statement of Concordia University-Chicago clearly states that our holistic goal is to "equip men and women to serve and lead with integrity, creativity, competence, and compassion in a diverse, interconnected, and increasingly urbanized church and world." Our Vision Statement goes on to add that CUC is an institution that openly seeks to "serve a particular need of society" as it advances "the mission of the Church." Even our Core Values are highly compatible with the beliefs that undergird Service Learning as they also state that we value our community and that we work to show this by "caring for each other in our work, in the classroom, and beyond."

There is no doubt in my mind, as a Christian woman, as having been an educator in both secular and Christian institutions of higher education and public high school and, especially, as a parent, that Service Learning is an effective tool for the creation of a caring individual and a caring community beyond the classroom. Our core values state that we value "individuals as fellow members in God's creation," therefore, engaging in service projects within the Chicagoland community allows our students - as well as staff members and faculty, if they wish, to provide "service as embodied by the servanthood of Jesus Christ."

As Christians we strive to follow Jesus' example, for He is our model. It is precisely because we choose to follow His example that we are called to be servants within our own community, servants who work towards a society and an educational system that is reformed and that is made whole by the integration of intellectual classroom work based in the liberal arts and experiential service work within our local community, "centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

Service Learning *is* a sound pedagogical philosophy that is compatible with our University's mission, vision and core values. We could not ask for anything better. ***LEJ***

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# Computers in the Classroom: Teaching Real World Values via a Cyberspace World

by Christina Wendland

*Editor's Note: The following was presented October 6, 2007 at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Lutheran College Faculties on the campus of Newberry College, Newberry, SC. The theme of the conference was "Beyond 'Whatever': Values Based Learning in Lutheran Higher Education". ALCF is a collaborative organization of forty-two Lutheran colleges and universities across the United States and represents the faculties of the Lutheran Educators National Conference (LECNA). The Journal thanks Professor Wendland for sharing the text of her address.*

**Introduction**

Whatever. It is a word I rarely use. It is a word my students use when they are at a loss for words. It is a word my eight-year old says when she wants to dismiss a comment or request. In the current vernacular, whatever is a word that connotes apathy. Whatever is a word that in many ways defines the attitude of an entire generation. Yet, even as I say that, I am reminded of the first stanza of "Waiting on the World to Change," a popular song by John Mayer. The song offers an alternative viewpoint to this perceived apathy. It says:

> Me and all my friends
> we're all misunderstood
> they say we stand for nothing and
> there's no way we ever could
> now we see everything that's going wrong
> with the world and those who lead it
> we just feel like we don't have the means
> to rise above and beat it[1]

This weekend, we are here to discuss ways in which we can change the world; or at least the world of Lutheran Higher Education. We are here to learn methods to help students to move past the apathy, "Beyond Whatever," and to add meaning and depth to their education. We are also here to discuss that rather nebulous term: Values-Based Learning.

As you are well aware, there are many shades of meaning in such a

phrase, and several of those nuances will be illuminated this weekend. I will approach the topic from a practical perspective. I will propose a new paradigm for applying values-based learning in the classroom, using technology. I will also demonstrate that the methods we use in the classroom, particularly the ways in which we use technology, can help our students develop and refine their existing values, while also encouraging them to acquire new values that they will use in their lives and careers after college.

**The Pervasiveness of Technology**

Last Spring, on the morning of the final exam in my introductory Bible class, one of my otherwise well-organized students arrived without her Bible. Knowing she would fail the exam without it, I sent her to the library to get a Bible. She responded by proclaiming that she did not know how to check a book out of the library. I was shocked. Here was a young woman, three days away from graduation, who was not aware of basic library procedure. Her only defense was that she did not read books because she expected to learn everything she needed to know from her professors.

This encounter was an eye-opener for me in two respects. First, it helped me realize that I am officially on the other side of the generation gap, not only in terms of my chronological age, but in terms of my worldview. I was at a loss to explain how a college senior could evade the books in the library for so long. Second, this encounter gave me a greater respect for the role technology plays in the lives of college students today. If this student was not checking books out of the library, then where was she getting information for research papers, group projects, presentations, and other class assignments? I was fairly certain she was not relying solely on her professors. As often happens, my interactions with my students challenge me to develop and refine my own thinking on any given subject, and this interaction was no exception. While teaching with technology has always been of interest to me, this particular incident was the impetus both for this paper and for me to think more deeply about my own use of technology in the classroom.

In a recent article, Jan Viktora, a faculty member at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas, made an observation about the evolving relationship between technology and pedagogy in theological schools that will provide some perspective on the relevance of this topic. She said,

> We live much of our lives face-to-face but are spending an increas-

> ing amount of our lives in mediated online environments…the engagement of technology has permeated all levels of education from preschool through doctoral studies and has become an acceptable and effective delivery system for lifelong learning. If theological schools wish to share their resources with the church, they will need to find more ways to do this through mediated online teaching and learning opportunities.[2]

In the two years since Viktora's article appeared, digital technology has become even more pervasive in day to day life. I would like to illustrate this point from the perspectives of both faculty and Students. First, the faculty. I have compiled a list of questions to help us gain some insight into where we fit in terms of our technological knowledge and use.

1. Do you use a cell phone? If so, for what tasks do you use it?
2. Do you use a computer regularly for work? What tasks do you perform with it?
3. Are you more comfortable using digital (i.e., email, cell phone), or print communication?
4. Are you proficient at the art of text-messaging?
5. Do you know how to obtain, manipulate, and utilize digital music files?
6. Are you aware of the growing popularity of social networking internet sites, such as MySpace and Facebook?

Now, for some perspective, how would the majority of our students answer similar questions? I took an informal survey of first-semester freshman at Newberry College and the following statements represent some of the results.

**Coincidental to…the growing presence of technology, is an…emphasis on values-based learning…**

1. One hundred percent of the students have a cell phone and 76.4% reported their cell phone as their primary means of communication with their friends. This includes text-messaging, which they can do with their thumbs…with their eyes closed…with the phone under the table.
2. Sixty percent of students said they were on the computer between 2-5 hours every day and 74.6% said they prefer the internet to books for class research.
3. In terms of social networking sites, the numbers are staggering.

Approximately 90% of the students who took the survey utilize Facebook, 64% are on MySpace, and about 9 percent said they used another site. Social networking sites are the fastest growing means of connecting with people around the world.

4. One additional item to note: 94% of students indicated that they learned much more when their professors used technology in the classroom. They offered the following reasons:
    a. Technology, particularly PowerPoint, can offer visual supplements to the content offered in class.
    b. Using technology increases class time because there are fewer and less cumbersome props.
    c. With technology, the material is better organized. Presumably, there is a direct correlation between the utilization of technology and the clarity of class content. I understood this particular response to have something to do with the poor quality of penmanship on the chalkboard.

With these statistics in mind, any good Lutheran institution should ask itself: What does this mean? While it is difficult to discuss the implications of this information within the scope of this paper, one conclusion stands out above the rest. The saturation of technology into daily life has created the need for new thinking about the nature of the educational environment. For example, The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, which "[specializes] in the educational application of technology" describes eight "literacies" that 21st century students need in order to be successful. Two of them are relevant for this topic: Technological Literacy and Information Literacy. The NCREL defines Technological Literacy as "knowledge about what technology is, how it works, what purposes it can serve, and how it can be used efficiently and effectively to achieve certain goals." Information literacy is "the ability to evaluate information across a range of media; recognize when information is needed; locate, synthesize, and use information effectively; and accomplish these functions using technology, communication networks and electronic resources."[3]

Similarly, a study conducted by my colleagues at Waldorf College in Forest City, IA articulates the same need in the following way:

> Technology has fundamentally changed the way we live, learn, work and educate. As faculty we need to improve the learning environment. To do so [sic] we must be willing to learn new strate-

> gies and tools that will create teaching environments that are models for student learning. Essentially, faculty must learn, teach and model academic technological tools that keep pace with the world community. As educators, we need to make our students technologically literate. As their mentors, we need to give our students the tools to access, manage, integrate, evaluate and create in a technological world. In addition, educators need to capitalize on emerging learning strategies enabled by technology to create effective learning environments for students.[4]

One need not dig too deeply to locate college and university campuses, both small and large, working feverishly to integrate technology into their total educational program. Waldorf and Newberry are two Lutheran campuses that are striving to acquire the necessary equipment and staff to improve use of technology in the classroom, as well as the funding necessary to educate faculty in the implementation of technology in their classes.

**Towards a New Paradigm**

Coincidental to the shift in pedagogy that has occurred as a result of the growing presence of technology, is an increasing emphasis on values-based learning in higher education. It is the intersection of these phenomena that provides the focal point for this paper. Rather than thinking in terms of teaching values through technology, however, I would like to propose a new paradigm that stems from the utilization of available digital technologies in the classroom. A personal illustration will introduce this new paradigm. This summer we visited family for the Fourth of July. When we returned home, we discovered four sparklers tucked into our daughter's pillowcase. When we confronted her, she reluctantly explained that she hid them because she was afraid her cousin would take them. We saw this as a relatively harmless learning experience for our daughter. Even though the total value of those sparklers was about five cents, we made her call her uncle and apologize for taking them. I think our daughter learned something that day about honesty and responsibility.

It can be argued that such a situation is about teaching values, in a linear sense. In other words, we can say that occasionally values are passed down from one generation to the next. In many ways, this is also the model of teaching used in the classroom. Educators have the information that they in turn hand down to students. Teaching, in this sense of the word, works because we are experts in our respective fields, we have worked long and hard to achieve that status, and students realize this. The question I would like to propose today, however, is this: Can values

be taught in a linear fashion to college students?

My argument is that where values-based learning is concerned, more traditional methods of teaching are not effective, in part because students today communicate and learn in non-traditional ways. Jan Viktora offers the following quip in her discussion:

> Our own graduate study could not have prepared us for the demands of teaching and learning in a digital age…Like many traditional educators who were classically trained, we fell into familiar and unreflective patterns for our teaching – either we taught the way we learned best or we taught the way we were taught. I have often heard the argument from colleagues in a discussion about the examination of teaching styles that 'I survived the lecture format and learned the content, so it should be good enough for my students.[5]

While the lecture format certainly remains a viable option for teaching content, it does not necessarily create an interactive learning environment, which, I would argue, is essential to values-based learning. At some level, values-based learning needs to take into consideration the experiences students bring to the classroom, something that does not happen in a more passive learning environment.

**Can values be taught in a linear fashion to college students?**

Perhaps the most difficult issues raised by a discussion of values-based learning revolve around the very definition of values. What values are we teaching? Whose values are we teaching? I know this topic will be covered by another presenter, so I will spend very little time on it here. I ask you to keep a broad range of values in mind. For now, suffice it to say that when college students enter the classroom they already have a set of values they have acquired from other sources such as family, church, and friends. For instance, the students who responded to my survey indicated the following values: God, faith, family, friends, hard work, integrity, honesty, responsibility, education, and the like. With the possible exception of the student who indicated football as a value, we might say that those values are similar to our own values, despite the generation gap and the difference in worldview. It is not the values themselves that are different, then, it is the shape those values take in a digital age that is different. For example, let's look at honesty. There is a sort of relativism in the concept of honesty in a digital age. To illustrate, earlier in the semes-

ter I wanted to establish a Facebook page for Moses and the Israelites as a way to teach my Hebrew Scriptures class about the Israelites' adventures in the wilderness. I wanted to invite feedback and blogs from those outside the classroom in order to add depth and perspective to the biblical narrative. However, when I looked into creating the webpage, I found out that Facebook.com would not allow me to create an identity that was so far removed from my own. Even if I put Moses' information into the personal information page, it was my name that appeared to the general public. So, it looked as if Christy Wendland was a middle-aged single man from Egypt. While my intentions were good, Facebook prevented me from being less than honest about my identity. I abandoned the project, but when I told my students about it, they suggested a way to create a fake identity on another social-networking site that would have worked perfectly for the class. Is this honesty? Do intentions have a role in creating the boundaries for honest actions? If so, how large a role?

It is these types of questions that we are faced with as educators in a digital age. It seems the boundaries of what might be considered "old-fashioned" values have expanded. In a discussion with Dr. Joe McDonald a couple weeks ago, he asked the question that prompted my thoughts on a new model for values-based learning: Can we really teach values, in the traditional sense? Rather than speaking of "teaching" I would like to speak about "facilitating" or even "mediating." Assuming that students arrive with a pre-determined set of values, what are we doing in the classroom? How is what we are doing in line with Lutheran higher education? The new paradigm can be summarized in the following sentence: We want to facilitate the personal, spiritual, and intellectual growth of students by engaging them in discussions that focus on a broad range of values. To narrow this even further, we want to challenge students to reorder and refine their own values in addition to acquiring new values. How can this be done through the use of technology in the classroom?

## 2 + 2 = 4: Computers in the Classroom

I'd like to offer some ideas of how we might apply digital technologies to values-based learning. Consider this an exercise in imagination and brainstorming. I will first discuss particular uses of technology, and then propose the possible contributions those technologies make to values-based learning.

### The Internet

For those of you who have access to the internet in your classrooms, there are some exciting ways to use it in teaching.

**A. Web Searches:** A relatively easy and harmless way of introducing technology into the classroom is to conduct a web search. If students have a laptop they can bring to class and receive wireless access to the internet, a web search is one way to challenge their existing ideas and expose them to new ideas. Divide students into groups and give each group a website that you have studied in advance. Students are then required to look at their website and summarize, evaluate, and respond to its contents. I used this method in a class discussion of salvation in the Old Testament, in part because most beginning Bible students don't believe that salvation exists in the Old Testament. Not only did my students discover that salvation does exist in the Old Testament, they also had the opportunity to discuss how people from various faith traditions viewed the subject.

**B. Blogs:** A blog, or more formally, a weblog, can be defined as a live online journal that can be easily and instantly updated. [It] can be a frequently posted list of interesting websites, or a personal diary of events and thoughts, or a combination of the two (among many other things).[6]

There are several uses for a blog in education. One might use a blog to stimulate and supplement classroom discussion. For example, one of the goals of my introductory Bible class is for students to become proficient at applying biblical concepts to their world. While much of the in-class discussion focuses on the content of the Bible, the blog provides a forum in which students can engage in virtual conversations with their peers about the applicability of biblical ideas. I set up a blog, which by the way was much easier than I thought it would be, and every two weeks I put a new post on it. Students are required to comment both on the post itself and the comments of at least three other people. This blog can be found at http://www.discoveringthebook.blogspot.com.

Students can be encouraged, or required, to utilize a blog as well. A student or group of students can substitute for the professor and submit a post on the readings for the week. With this method, students would be required to summarize the week's material and provide a discussion question or two that would then be commented upon by other students.

The truly daring professor might require students to write their own blog as part of their final grade. Such an assignment might replace a traditional research paper, or supplement one. Students in upper level courses might write a blog that centers on an area of primary interest to them. The blog could cover major developments and debates within that area, or it might help provide direction for future research, or offer a bibliogra-

phy for others interested in the topic.[7] Of course, such a requirement for students would also require a great amount of advance preparation for the professor, such as establishing requisite criteria and providing access to blogging software per the institution's guidelines, and possibly explaining to students how a blog works. As technologically savvy as our students are, I have discovered that many of them have never used a blog before.

**C. Social-networking sites:** The Online Cyber Safety website defines social networking sites as

> …places on the Internet where people meet in cyberspace to chat, socialize, debate, and network…Regardless of the language, culture, or the nation where the Social Networking Site originates, all of them share the same feature of helping people connect with others who have similar interests.[8]

The most popular social networking sites include Facebook, Friendster, MySpace, and Bebo. Similar to a blog, but with much more depth, social networking sites can be great resources for interaction with others in the same field. One could establish a profile on any one of the aforementioned sites and join a virtual community of people from across the world in his/her field. In this way, he/she would be able to stay up to date on research, have access to new ideas in teaching, or get information about conferences. While much of the literature about social networking sites contains information about safety issues, such as solicitation and identity theft, there is also a growing trend toward integrating social networking sites into curricula across the spectrum of education. Utilizing social networking sites in education has the potential to aide students with language and comprehension skills, basic writing skills, as well as to enhance their understanding of appropriate dissemination and accumulation of information.

I experimented with the use of a social networking site in my Hebrew Scriptures class. Some of the students created a MySpace page for Elijah for their midterm project. They created a profile that included relevant information about Elijah. Not only did they need to know something about Elijah, which required them to explore the biblical text, but they also needed to think about how to present that information in a manner that was accessible to their classmates. In addition, they needed to consider issues of responsibility, honesty, and integrity in using a common website for unusual purposes.

**D. Online Learning Communities:** I am only going to mention

online learning communities briefly, because they are a more contained form of classroom and as such, they present unique challenges and benefits. If your institution provides opportunities for distance learning, you may already be familiar with the premise behind online learning communities. Online learning communities can also be described as "virtual classrooms," in which there are several participants, but no face-to-face interaction. Distance learning is convenient, both in terms of time commitment and accessibility for the learner. Yet, the faceless interaction component presents the greatest source of contention between advocates and opponents of distance learning. One of the inherent goals of the classroom environment is to create a community in which participants feel comfortable expressing their ideas, engaging in conversation with others, and in which learning takes place on several levels. It is these dimensions of community that appear to be missing from an online learning environment. On the other hand, much is being done by those who utilize online learning to facilitate a sense of community. Decreasing computer glitches, making the homepage user-friendly, providing multiple accessibility points for learners, and offering immediate feedback on discussions all help the learner feel comfortable in an online learning environment.[9]

## Classroom Response Systems

A Classroom Response System, or CRS, is "a set of hardware and software that facilitates teaching activities."[10] A CRS works much like the voting system on the TV show "American Idol." Each student has a "clicker" that is wirelessly connected to the professor's computer. There are a variety of uses for a CRS in the classroom. It can be used to take attendance, to gauge student understanding on a given topic, to take quizzes, or to play games. Perhaps the biggest advantage of using a CRS is its ability to allow for real time assessment of students. Rather than waiting for a test to determine a student's understanding of a topic, a CRS can collect the data immediately. Say, for instance, that I want to know if my students grasp the ideas presented in the reading, I can have a list of questions prepared at the beginning of class that address that particular reading. Student responses via the clicker will indicate their level of understanding, which in turn determines how I proceed with class discussions. I will know immediately if I need to spend more time on any given topic, or if I can move on to the next topic.

Real-time feedback also presents the opportunity for engaging students in discussion. If the professor and students can see, for instance,

that students are divided on a topic, a debate might be initiated or the class can discuss underlying reasons for the division. Such technology, of course, requires from the professor some spontaneity and the ability to change directions on the spot.

**Technology and Values**

As I mentioned earlier, one of the primary difficulties of speaking about values-based learning is to define precisely what is meant by the word *values*. I have proposed that teaching values is not uni-directional , but multi-directional. That is, values-based learning occurs when pre-existing values are challenged and refined, and when new values are acquired. I have also proposed that such a paradigm has the potential to incorporate a wide variety of values.

One of the advantages of living in a digital age is that we have instant access to unlimited amounts of information. One of the disadvantages of living in a digital age is that we have instant access to unlimited amounts of information. How does one go about sorting through all that information and deciding what is relevant and what is not? Think back to your own college days, when you learned to sort through resources, usually books and articles, and you learned how to evaluate those sources according to criteria given to you by your professors. The same skills are necessary in a digital age, yet the resource bank has grown exponentially in the last decade. Using technology in the classroom can stimulate intellectual growth by helping students learn to evaluate and discuss information in a way that is both familiar and useful to them. A web search, for instance, can give students an immediate, safe context in which to explore ideas that might very well be outside their comfort zone. They learn to bounce ideas off others in their group, to think critically about the information before them, and to come to some quick conclusions about the website they are exploring.

**Using technology in the classroom can stimulate intellectual growth by helping students learn to evaluate and discuss information in a way that is both familiar and useful to them.**

In addition, by using technology, students can learn to clarify their own ideas of integrity. What does integrity mean in a digital age? Particularly with regard to the internet, which is largely uncensored, what does it mean to be true to yourself and to others? In the course of a

web search, students can begin to distinguish between those sites and authors that have credibility because they are truthful about who they are and what they are about and those sites and authors who can be ignored because they lack integrity. Students can learn in a much more formal and immediate way what it means to present themselves to the public, acknowledging that "public" in this case represents the entire world. A blog, much like an in-class discussion, facilitates the open and honest exchange of ideas. However, unlike an in-class discussion, students have some time to think about their responses to the ideas of others. In a classroom setting, open discussion can be hampered by spontaneous outbursts, by students who refuse to participate, or by students who participate too often. Sometimes, responses are not conducive to productive discussion. With a blog, students can read and think in private, and take the time to respond with thoughtfulness and tact.

In addition, a blog, because of the relatively anonymous nature of it, allows students to be more honest with their thoughts than they might be in the classroom. Particularly for freshmen, who are more often than not a bit timid about expressing themselves in class, an opportunity to do so as part of an ongoing, online discussion is a benefit. It just might be that by first expressing their thoughts on a blog, students might gain enough confidence in their verbal skills to express themselves in a classroom setting.

One of the most heavily debated topics concerning the use of technology is whether or not it is conducive to genuine community. Especially when speaking about social-networking sites and online learning communities, one might wonder whether the essential elements of community are present. Is there trust among the members of the community? Is there a shared sense of purpose? Do the members of the community have a particular role to play in the community? Is there a distinct set of norms under which the community operates? In other words, what kind of community is one trying to create in the classroom, and can that community be duplicated via technology?

A great advantage to using technology in the classroom, no matter how it's done, is that it helps create an interactive, energized classroom community. Not too long ago, I had a conversation in my Bible class about the suffering of the righteous and the Bible's answers to the question. This sparked a heated debate, without the use of technology. Some topics need no help from technology. However, after the fact, I wonder if I could have facilitated the conversation more effectively if I had used pictures or songs or YouTube videos that portray real-life suffering and

the responses that people give to suffering.

Perhaps the greatest value mediated through the use of technology in the classroom is that of life-long learning. Utilizing new technologies means taking the time first to learn how they work and second how to apply them to a specific academic field. Imagine if we put as much academic rigor into learning how to use these technologies as we put into our research. When we make an effort to learn how to use technology effectively, we model learning for our students. We can demonstrate to them that learning does not stop with a terminal degree. Learning happens daily and in various contexts. We can also demonstrate that learning is not about accumulating knowledge, but about continually re-applying accumulated knowledge to our own context. Learning to use technology requires much more than learning a prescribed amount of information and spitting it out on a test. For many of us learning how to use new technology requires confronting a fear of the unknown and trial and error. These are the components of life-long learning that are vital to the educational process and that can be effectively mediated in the classroom.

By way of conclusion, I would like to say that in a digital age, technology cannot be ignored or put on the back burner to look at later. Our students come to us with far more knowledge of the uses of technology than we might ever have. To place them in an antiquated educational environment is to negate their identity to some extent. In terms of vocation, I hope that we, as educators, can think seriously about our own sense of vocation, as well as how we can integrate 21st century skills and knowledge into our classrooms in order to encourage our students to develop their own understanding of what it means to have a vocation and a sense of service in and to the world. ***LEJ***

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# Career Factors of Public and Lutheran School Administrators

by Daniel R. Tomal

*This study compared the rankings of career factors for obtaining a school administrative position among three groups: public school administrators, Lutheran school administrators, and Lutheran administrator candidates. The samples consisted of 71 public administrators, and 21 Lutheran administrators, and 17 Lutheran candidates from selected schools in northeast Illinois. Data were collected using a questionnaire listing ten career factors. Results indicated that while all three groups ranked leadership skills as being the most important factor, public administrators gave a higher importance to financial administrative skills, having a mentor, and knowledge of education as compared to Lutheran administrators. Lutheran administrators valued communications skills more than public administrators. Lutheran administrator candidates valued excellent performance evaluations more than the Lutheran administrators, while Lutheran administrators placed a higher importance to financial administrative skills, and gender and ethnicity.*

Selecting the best candidate for a school administrative position is a critical responsibility of all school boards. There are many factors that boards must consider in a candidate: leadership, financial management, interpersonal relations, and communications (Wagnor & Kegan, 2006). The more a candidate understands which of these factors are most important for a given administrative position the better chance he or she will have of being selected, and that the candidate will have a successful career in school administration (Algozzine & Jazzar, 2006; Tomal, 2007).

While there have been several research studies on the topic of success in school administration, most of them have focused on personality characteristics versus job entry factors. For example, in a study by Wendell and Hoke (1993) they identified eleven factors that contributed to school administration success. Some these included: effective communications, collaborative leadership, risk taking, community outreach, positive staff relations, and having a clear personal philosophy.

In another study, Scarvati (1994) indicated that administrators cannot succeed unless they practice honesty and integrity, work to eliminate fear,

demonstrate care and understanding, accept responsibility, develop a service mentality, develop loyalty, become flexible and adaptable, develop listening skills, and practice humility.

Understanding the career factors needed for obtaining an administrative position may be especially useful for women and minorities. Many studies have reported that there are various barriers: lack of mentoring, societal perceptions, recruitment deficiencies, and discrimination, for women and minorities (Julia, 1999). As a result, women and minorities have been under-represented in administration (Smith, 2000). Identifying career factors as a framework for discussion may help women and minorities achieve equal opportunities for administrative positions and help break down these barriers.

The basis of this study was developed as an outgrowth of discussions with graduate students who were interested in identifying the most important factors for securing an entry-level position in educational administration. The researchable questions for this study were:

1. What are the most important career factors for obtaining a job in school administration?
2. Is there a correlation between the rank-ordered career factors by Lutheran candidates and practicing Lutheran administrators?
3. Is there a correlation between the rank-ordered career factors by Lutheran school administrators and public school administrators?

## Method

### Subjects

The subjects of this study consisted of 71 public school administrators, 21 Lutheran school administrators, and 17 Lutheran administrator candidates from selected elementary and secondary schools in northeast Illinois. All administrator candidates were graduate students in a university educational leadership program. They were also all practicing public school teachers. The administrators were practicing school administrators such as principals, assistant principals, and directors. The subjects came from diverse economic, cultural, ethnic, gender, and academic backgrounds.

Limitations of the study included non-random selection, low and disproportionate sample numbers, and lack of validation that the career factors were representative of the factors by hiring school boards.

### Procedures

A two-part questionnaire was used in this study. Part one consisted of

a list of 10 career factors in which the respondents were asked to rank order the factors based upon their importance in obtaining an entry-level administrative position in public education (See table 1). The second part consisted of an open-ended question that asked the respondent to describe any other factors that were important for an applicant in obtaining an administrative position.

## Table 1: Ranking of Career Factors

*Public Administrators*

| | Career Factors | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Leadership ability | 2.15 |
| 2. | Financial skills | 2.93 |
| 3. | Education knowledge | 3.06 |
| 4. | Communication skills | 3.92 |
| 5. | Interpersonal skills | 4.00 |
| 6. | Performance evaluations | 7.07 |
| 7. | Visibility at school | 7.69 |
| 8. | Having a mentor | 7.79 |
| 9. | Personal appearance | 8.17 |
| 10. | Gender/ethnicity | 8.31 |

*NOTE: See appendix for Career Factor definitions.*

### Results

The career factors of all groups were rank ordered, and significant differences were calculated using the Mann Whitney test of significance. The findings indicated that the top career factor of importance to all practicing administrators and candidates was leadership ability. Written comments supported this top career factor with statements such as "administrators need to create and obtain staff support for a school vision," "the ability to make hard leadership decisions," "the ability to lead the school in the right direction," and "the integrity and honesty as a leader."

The top five career factors of importance to the public school administrators were: leadership ability, financial administrative skills, education knowledge, communications skills, and interpersonal skills (see table 1). The top five career factors of importance for the Lutheran administrators were leadership ability, communications skills, interpersonal skills, financial administrative skills, and knowledge of education (see table 2).

## Table 2: Ranking of Career Factors

*Lutheran Administrators*

| | Career Factors | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Leadership abilities | 2.86 |
| 2. | Communications skills | 2.92 |
| 3. | Interpersonal skills | 3.30 |
| 4. | Financial skills | 3.54 |
| 5. | Education knowledge | 4.61 |
| 6. | Visibility at school | 6.53 |
| 7. | Performance evaluations | 7.03 |
| 8. | Gender/ethnicity | 7.24 |
| 9. | Personal appearance | 7.54 |
| 10. | Having a mentor | 9.58 |

The top five career factors of importance to the Lutheran administrator candidates were leadership ability, interpersonal skills, communications skills, knowledge of education, and having excellent performance evaluations (see table 3). Some supporting written comments by all three groups included: "the ability to communicate clearly to the staff," "leading and inspiring people," "one's knowledge of educational practices," and "the importance of being able to motivate teachers and children to perform at their highest abilities."

## Table 3: Ranking of Career Factors

*Lutheran Candidates*

| | Career Factors | Mean |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Leadership ability | 1.93 |
| 2. | Interpersonal skills | 3.23 |
| 3. | Communications skills | 3.54 |
| 4. | Education knowledge | 4.16 |
| 5. | Performance evaluations | 4.70 |
| 6. | Financial skills | 5.62 |
| 7. | Personal appearance | 6.85 |
| 8. | Visibility at school | 6.92 |
| 9. | Having a mentor | 8.62 |
| 10. | Gender/ethnic background | 9.54 |

There were many similarities in the top career rankings between the public school and Lutheran school administrators such as leadership ability, the need for excellent interpersonal and communications skills, financial administrative skills, and knowledge of education (see table 4). Public

school administrators, however, ascribed higher importance to the career factors of knowledge of education($p < .01$), having a mentor ($p < .05$), and financial administrative skills($p < .05$). Lutheran administrators ranked the career factor of communication skills as more importance as compared to public administrators ($p < .01$). Some supporting written comments by the public administrators included: "It is who you know that helps get you the job," "You have to know what is going on in education to be successful," and "people underestimate the importance of good financial skills and understanding computer financial management."

## Table 4: Comparison of Means

*Public to Lutheran Administrators*

| | PA (n=71) | | LA (n=21) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career Factors** | **Mean** | **(SD)** | **Mean** | **(SD)** |
| Education knowledge | **3.06 | (1.61) | 4.74 | (1.79) |
| Having a mentor | *7.79 | (1.60) | 8.67 | (1.00) |
| Personal appearance | 8.17 | (1.52) | 7.81 | (1.66) |
| Financial skills | *2.93 | (1.55) | 4.10 | (2.30) |
| Performance evaluations | 7.07 | (1.85) | 6.86 | (2.51) |
| Leadership ability | 2.15 | (1.55) | 2.24 | (1.40) |
| Communications skills | ** 3.92 | (1.66) | 2.57 | (1.21) |
| Interpersonal skills | 4.00 | (1.49) | 3.62 | (1.43) |
| Visibility at school | 7.69 | (1.78) | 6.81 | (2.14) |
| Gender/ethnicity | 8.31 | (1.73) | 7.81 | (2.16) |

*p <0.05
**p <0.01

A comparison of Lutheran administrators and Lutheran candidates showed many similarities in rankings (see table 5 next page). These groups especially valued leadership ability, interpersonal and communications skills, and knowledge of education. The significant differences between these two groups indicated that Lutheran administrators ascribed higher importance to financial administrative skills ($p < .05$), and gender/ethnicity ($p < .01$), and that Lutheran candidates ranked excellent performance evaluations ($p < .05$) as higher in importance ($p < .01$).

Some written comments by Lutheran administrators indicated that some parish hiring boards may still give preference to male applicants. Also, Lutheran administrators indicated that they did not appreciate the importance of financial management prior to obtaining an administrative

## Table 5: Comparison of Means

*Lutheran Administrators to Candidates*

| | LA (n=21) | | LC (n=17) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Career Factors** | **Mean** | **(SD)** | **Mean** | **(SD)** |
| Education knowledge | 4.74 | (1.79) | 4.15 | (2.82) |
| Having a mentor | 8.67 | (1.00) | 8.62 | (1.04) |
| Personal appearance | 7.81 | (1.66) | 6.85 | (1.21) |
| Financial skills | *4.10 | (2.30) | 5.62 | (1.20) |
| Performance evaluations | *6.86 | (2.51) | 4.70 | (1.89) |
| Leadership ability | 2.24 | (1.40) | 1.92 | (1.12) |
| Communications skills | 2.57 | (1.21) | 3.53 | (2.76) |
| Interpersonal skills | 3.62 | (1.43) | 3.23 | (2.76) |
| Visibility at school | 6.81 | (2.14) | 6.92 | (2.29) |
| Gender/ethnicity | ** 7.81 | (2.16) | 9.54 | (0.97) |

*p<0.05
**p<0.01

position. Examples of these comments included "I still feel uncomfortable with doing the finances, so I try and delegate it to my assistant," and "I didn't realize the amount of financial paperwork that was involved with being a principal."

**Discussion**

It appears that there are many similarities among public school and Lutheran school administrators in what they feel are the most important factors that lead to obtaining an administrative position. Operating any school, whether private or public, probably requires similar administrative skills and abilities. While public administrators ranked financial administration, and knowledge of education at a higher level of importance this might be explained by the fact that there may be more involved state and district academic and financial requirements in public school administration. Also, public school administrators may feel the process of obtaining an administrative position may be more political and the need to have a mentor can help.

One implication of this study is the apparent fact that Lutheran administrator candidates do not value the need for financial administrative skills as much as practicing Lutheran administrators. It could be hypothesized that teachers who seek to become administrators may have a greater interest in student academic achievement than in school financial management. Also, perhaps practicing Lutheran administrators have

recognized the importance of good fiscal understanding and fiduciary responsibility in operating a school. The administrator candidates probably cannot fully appreciate this importance without having had some administrative experience.

Therefore, it might be useful for university programs to emphasize the need for financial skills in preparing candidates for administrative positions. Also, an evaluation of educational leadership programs to insure adequate coverage may also be beneficial.

While there was not a significant difference in the ranking of career factor of gender and ethnicity between public administrators and Lutheran administrators, there was a significant difference between Lutheran administrators and the candidates. Lutheran administrators felt that an applicant's gender or ethnicity in obtaining an administrative position was more important than the Lutheran candidates. Lutheran candidates may have a more idealistic view towards this issue while practicing administrators believe that gender or ethnicity is an important determinant in the selection an administrator. Given that practicing administrators felt that gender and ethnicity were more important than the candidates, the topic of diversity in hiring appears to be an important subject for continued study in graduate school leadership programs.

The more that candidates can work with practicing administrators, the more they will understand the factors needed in securing an administrative position. Gaining an understanding of these factors, especially of a particular school district, can assist a candidate in developing desirable skills and preparing for the interview. ***LEJ***

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**Appendix**

| Career Factor | Description |
|---|---|
| 1. **Education Knowledge** | Knowledge of educational theories,trends, and practices |
| 2. **Having a mentor** | Knowing a person of influence who might help a candidate obtain a job |
| 3. **Appearance** | Candidate's personal appearance |
| 4. **Financial administrative** | Knowledge of finance and skills administration |
| 5. **Performance evaluations** | Past performance evaluations |
| 6. **Leadership ability** | Educational leadership skills |
| 7. **Communications skills** | Verbal and written communication skills |
| 8. **Interpersonal skills** | Ability to get along with people |
| 9. **Visibility at school** | Active in school activities |
| 10. **Gender/ethnicity** | Candidate's gender or ethnicity |

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# Guinea Pigs and On-Line Graduate Courses: Can Old Graduate Students Survive in the New WebCT6 Maze?

by Kim Marxhausen

**From the Tongue-in-Cheek Research Department:**

"*Can an old dog learn a new trick?" is the ubiquitous question of social scientists. This research program was designed in an effort to determine whether a human subject, born before the era of computer learning, could adapt to the rigors of teaching and learning on-line. Of course, it would be unethical to attempt such an experiment on human subjects. Therefore, twelve guinea pigs were procured and trained for this purpose. One was randomly chosen to be the adjunct professor (hereby referred to as AP) and the remaining eleven to serve as graduate students (GS1, GS2, etc.) After minimum training the subjects were placed into the WebCT6 maze specifically designed for this experiment. The subjects were observed by the researcher. This research design is pre-experimental and uses a one-shot case study.*[1] *The results of this experiment should prove useful to on-line graduate programs across the nation.*

**Hypothesis**

A guinea pig, with a minimum amount of training, can consistently navigate the maze of WebCT6 and achieve 3 hours of graduate credit as measured with a Mann – Whitney U Statistic converted to a $z$ ordinate of the normal distribution. (a=0.05)

**Null hypothesis**

A guinea pig, with a minimum amount of training will be unable to navigate the WebCT6 maze and will render its own intellectual capacity null and void.

**Definition of terms and equipment**

*Chocolate dispenser*: a plastic jar full of chocolate pellets with a dispenser lever available to the guinea pigs at all times.

*Diet carbonated caffeine dispenser*: a plastic bottle full of diet carbonated caf-

1. This is a research design designation (as noted by Mason and Bramble, p.106,) and is NOT in reference to the professor from a state University in the Midwest who received a visit from the campus police after threatening, via email, to shoot the webCT6 support staff.

feine available to the guinea pigs at all times.

*Guinea Pig Computer*: a teeny tiny computer with a wireless network card that allows the guinea pigs to go on-line to take (or teach) a class, thus completing the WebCT6 maze.

*WebCT6 Maze*: A deviously designed maze that tests the intellectual and emotional limits of guinea pig graduate students and guinea pig adjunct professors.[2]

*One-Shot Case Study*: This is considered a pre-experimental design. It studies a single group during the course of a prescribed treatment or program.[3] The design is considered essentially worthless, but is fun to watch.[4]

**Limitations**

This study was conducted among guinea pig graduate students and subsequently is applicable only to similar situations.

**Guinea pigs are no more skilled at navigation of the WebCT6 maze than human graduate students.**

The researcher is limited by what is remembered from the required statistics class and the scientific research completed for a Masters degree in the early 1990's.[5]

**Delimitations**

No attempt has been made to determine the over-all effects of the WebCT6 maze on guinea pig graduate students.

No attempt has been made to determine how much chocolate or diet carbonated caffeine is appropriate for guinea pig graduate students or their guinea pig adjunct professors.

**Assumptions**

Guinea pigs will react like human graduate students when introduced to the WebCT6 maze.[6]

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2. PETA has successfully lobbied for anti-WebCT6 maze legislation in several states on the grounds that it represents cruel and unusual treatment of rodents.
3. Mason and Bramble, page 106
4. Given that observation, it is predicted the media will wholly support the results of this study.
5. The researcher has no idea what the Mann – Whitney U statistic is or how it is used, but, loved the way it tripped off the tongue during class.

Guinea pigs are no more skilled at navigation of the WebCT6 maze than human graduate students.

The WebCT6 maze will work as designed.[7]

Guinea pigs can survive on a diet of diet carbonated caffeine and chocolate.

Guinea pigs who rub their temples with their teeny tiny guinea pig paws and make frequent use if the guinea pig chocolate dispenser are experiencing a migraine headache.

**Procedures**

Guinea pigs were trained for use of the WebCT6 maze by the researcher.[8]

Guinea pigs were instructed to check their browsers, pop-up blockers and firewalls to ensure that the WebCT6 maze would work properly on their computers.

In order to introduce the maximum amount of stress into the guinea pig environment: the WebCT6 maze was made available in small increments, doors were frequently placed in the path of the guinea pigs that stated "the WebCT6 maze has timed out: try again," pop-up blockers where hidden in every conceivable program, and a computer warning that subjects were trained to ignore, frequently popped up to instruct the subject to up-load software that previously had been deleted.

The AP began leading GS 1-11 through the WebCT6 maze. Immediately the wireless connection dropped leaving the guinea pigs in the dark. This action was repeated throughout the experiment.[9]

Internet connection was restored and the guinea pigs proceeded through the maze.

Eventually, all GS guinea pigs completed the maze and received 3 hours of graduate credit. The researcher was unable to find the AP guinea

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6. It is important to note that while guinea pigs have a body shape and metabolism similar to graduate students it is recognized that human graduate students have a nervous system better described by agitated gerbils. However, the researcher felt that guinea pigs were still the best testing option.
7. This is just a little humor on the part of the researcher. After all, this is computer software.
8. In order to more closely simulate conditions at the graduate college, the researcher herself had minimum training in the operations of the maze. Because she is an English major, AND has no formal training, she is considered double-blind.
9. This alone may explain the lobbying actions of PETA

pig and it is presumed lost in the WebCT6 maze.[10]

The surviving guinea pig subjects were interviewed to better determine their reaction to the experience.

**Observations**

The guinea pig chosen to be the AP did not seem to train well and frequently had to be re-taught routines.

AP continually made wrong turns in the maze.[11]

Turning on the computer seemed to train the AP and GS guinea pigs to immediately procure chocolate and diet carbonated caffeine from the dispensers. This was a behavior akin to a Pavlovian response.

Subjects GS1, GS5, GS6, GS7, GS10 and GS11 increased their body weight by 50% by the end of the experiment.

Subjects GS2, GS3, GS4, and GS8 developed guinea pig facial tics.[12] Subject GS9 developed the habit of banging its head against the walls of the maze.[13]

**Results**

The researcher, a frequent user of the WebCT6 system, is pleased to report that the null hypothesis is not entirely supported. Testing done at the conclusion of the experiment gave evidence that while some of the GS subjects were feeling null, none of the subjects were declared void. In fact, when notified that they had all been granted 3 hours of graduate credit, several signed up for a degree program.

**Summary, conclusions, and recommendations**

The result of this research study represents good news for graduate colleges. The fact that all of the guinea pig graduate student subjects successfully navigated the WebCT6 maze serves as hope for human graduate students. It is not known, however, if the results of this study are generalizable over the human graduate student population.

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10. A plaque commemorating the loss of this subject was erected at the site of the maze. It is not known if the site is frequented by fellow guinea pigs but occasionally teeny tiny wreaths are left on the marker.
11. It is assumed this particular guinea pig suffered some sort of brain damage. It is, however, possible that it was used in a previous experiment and received training on a different WebCT maze.
12. This tic presented itself as sometimes violent simultaneous nose twitches and eye blinks.
13. GS9 was also observed eating its computer. It was not determined whether this was relative to the experiment or simply represented an aberration in the testing subjects.

It should be noted that the long term effects of WebCT6 have not been studied. The subjects in this experiment were subjected to the estimated stress inherent in one class. It is not known what would result if an entire degree program were completed. Further study is indicated.

Additionally, the unknown fate of the guinea pig serving as the adjunct professor represents a concern. Further study will be needed to determine if this was due to a flaw in the guinea pig chosen for this part of the study or if the WebCT6 maze has fatal effects on faculty members.

On a bright note for graduate programs, the results of this experiment could open up a whole new avenue for revenue; namely guinea pigs as actual graduate students. This would of course be dependent on the Federal Government approving student loans for rodents. ***LEJ***

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# Go...and Teach! The Teacher as Competent Problem Solver

by Jane Buerger

**Part 1**

Everyone has problems. What's his problem? What's *your* problem?

Except for those of us who really love mathematics, most individuals probably have a negative reaction to the sentences above or to problems in general. For most people, problems occur when things go wrong, when someone makes a mistake, or when someone gets angry. So do mathematics teachers love problems? Do they really enjoy setting up equations based on the so-called "story problems" in the textbooks? Or is there something about problems that the rest of us are missing?

Maybe this is just a matter of definition. To a mathematician, a problem is a question or a situation which requires a novel or non-routine reaction on the part of the solver (Polya, 1976). A problem is not necessarily a negative situation, but it is a circumstance that presents a challenge which has not been encountered previously in exactly the same way.

I can imagine a teacher seeing this definition and exclaiming, "Welcome to my world!"

The days of a teacher are, for the most part, far from monotonous. Daily challenges arise as a result of subject matter, students, school environment, and realities outside the classroom. To most of us, these challenges are what make our careers so fascinating. The resolutions of these challenging situations often requires behavior from the teacher that is original and creative, for no two situations are exactly the same, and what worked last year may or may not be effective again. Teachers are constantly involved in problem solving.

In the field of mathematics, problem solving activities often lead persons to discover mathematics that are new, at least to them. In much the same way, teachers who are problem solvers continue to build a repertoire of strategies to reach even the most reluctant student or to teach classes using new materials and methods.

The literature of problem solving identifies a number of characteristics of successful problem solvers. These

include favorable dispositions or attitudes, positive beliefs, an adequate knowledge base, basic skills, and metacognition or reflective practice. Over the next few months, we'll explore each of these, beginning with favorable dispositions, in detail.

In general, a teacher's dispositions are related to his or her attitudes, feelings, or opinions about a person, an object, an idea, or an activity. Having a positive disposition toward someone or something indicates that a person tends to act in a positive manner with respect to that person, idea, or activity. Teachers who are successful problem solvers must have a disposition or willingness to work with students, administrators, and others in a way that demonstrates caring compassion and respect. This disposition, or positive attitude, will lead a teacher to identify best practices in their work with students and with other adults and them to put these practices into use. The following list is meant to suggest some of the problems that teachers encounter on a daily basis and the dispositions needed to solve them.

**A Teacher should be willing to:**

**1. Implement Developmentally Appropriate Practices**

St. Paul recognized the necessity of adapting his teaching to the spiritual developmental maturity of his followers. He wrote to the Corinthians, "I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you still are not ready" (I Cor. 3:2-3a).

Teachers are regularly called upon to adapt their teaching to the academic maturity of their students. This proves to be a real challenge when schools adopt multi-age classrooms, either by choice or because of necessity. Although having a classroom full of five-, six- and seven-year-olds guarantees a wide range of developmental levels, a teacher who teaches just one grade will also find some students who aren't quite ready to work at grade level and others who are really academically ready for a higher grade. Ideally teachers will have some experiences with the grades or classes that immediately precede or follow their own class so that their children won't be forced to attempt activities that aren't developmentally appropriate.

Jerome Bruner (1966, p. 1) began his book *Toward a Theory of Instruction* with the words, "Instruction is, after all, an effort to assist or to shape growth…and a theory of instruction…is in effect a theory of how growth and development are assisted by diverse means." Meeting the students at their own level will enable them to learn and to move ahead successfully. Forcing students to work at an inappropriate level

may, however, cause them frustration and possible failure.

**2. Respect and Support Diversity**

Teaching a class composed of students who differ in learning style, gender, race, ethnicity, economic status, exceptionality, or religion is another situation which requires a teacher to be a competent problem solver. St. Paul also addresses diversity later in the same letter to the Corinthians. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone" (I Cor. 12:4-5).

Research has shown that students often bring misconceptions about those who are different from themselves to the classrooms (Banks, 1989). These attitudes are damaging, both to the children who are the targets of the negative opinions and also to the children who hold the opinions. It is imperative that teachers model positive attitudes toward all types of students. It is absolutely inappropriate to assume that *different* is somehow *deficient* (Villegas & Lucas). Teachers are also challenged to find teaching strategies and learning experiences to meet these differences. Different learning styles require provisions for a variety of activities for the class; different cultures provide opportunities for sharing traditions and celebrations.

Respect and support can be particularly challenging when the diversity comes from differences in religious affiliations. Teachers, especially those of young children, should be sensitive to the fact that a child's family often dictates religious practices, including holiday observances or baptism. It is possible to teach about the love of Jesus without casting negative messages about other religious traditions, and it is also possible that a little child who learns about the love of Jesus can take this message home to his or her family.

**3. Model Ethical Behavior**

No one would argue against the fact that teachers should model ethical behavior. Sometimes, especially in public settings, determining what is ethical can become a problem in itself (Strike & Soltis, 1985). Fortunately in a Lutheran school this becomes a bit easier. Scripture guides our moral principles. For many Lutheran teachers, their career choice is actually a calling which permeates their entire life. The desire to serve God by teaching His children is motivated by gratitude for the Good News of the Gospel.

**4. Demonstrate Responsibility, Reliability, and Professionalism**

Responsibility, reliability, and professionalism are qualities that relate not only to the teacher's relationships with students but also to his or her dealings with colleagues, administrators, parents, and others in the church and community. We can hope that most teachers see these as an expected part of their job. The truth is that developing these qualities will lead to greater professional success, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Effective teachers assume *responsibility* for the progress of the students in their classrooms and will see the annual performance reviews as a chance to improve their effectiveness in working with those students. Teachers who are *reliable* will find themselves in positions to make positive contributions in their schools because they have shown that they are dependable. Finally, teachers who exude a positive air of *professionalism* can effectively communicate with students, colleagues, administrators, parents, and others (Wong & Wong, 1998).

**5. Demonstrate Care and Compassion.**

At first glance, the idea that a teacher should be a caring individual may seem like a simple one, but developing a description of a caring teacher can be a challenging task. Most people would list attributes such as gentleness and warmth, but many of us remember teachers who seemed gruff and demanding but who honestly cared deeply about their students.

Some define caring as a willingness to bring out the best in students through encouragement and positive feedback. Others would add understanding and a genuine love of children. Noddings (1999) includes a willingness to adapt lessons to make them more accessible and interesting to students. She also adds, [teachers who establish caring relationships] "are respectful toward children, have fair rules that they do not apply rigidly, create safe emotional environments, and give personal attention to students who need it" (Noddings, 1999, p. 208).

No matter how *caring* is defined, a teacher who cares for students is attentive to the students and is willing to allow her/his own needs recede, at least temporarily, to the background. The need for caring and compassionate teachers is critical. In today's economic and technological realities, face-to-face interaction with a caring, concerned adult is often what children need most and unfortunately is all too often unavailable. A teacher who is truly compassionate can fill what could otherwise be a

devastating void in a young person's life. A teacher who cares enough to share the love of Jesus with a student can provide that student with an anchor against whatever challenges life holds.

**Finally – a teacher should be willing to be a problem solver.**

Having all of these great dispositions won't guarantee that the problems of teaching will go away. There will be days that leave us tired, and looking forward to a vacation. We do, however, have the assurance that we ourselves are children of a loving God who listens to our prayer and does give us the strength to meet the challenges that our students, colleagues, administrators, and parents bring to us every day. Positive dispositions, including a willingness to tackle the problems, are essential for successful teaching. Positive dispositions are easier to maintain when we remember the One who first cared for us. ***LEJ***

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# Administrative Talk...Are We Having Fun Yet?

by Glen Kuck

I once asked a principal, "What makes you happy during the school day?"

He thought for a while and responded, "Nothing."

I was initially surprised by his response, but then realized that his response may at times be the same as that of some other principals, including myself. It seems that whatever happiness comes during a day at school is tempered by the many nagging worries about the school that never go away. Those concerns have a way of stealing the joy from a situation. Laughter is often short-lived.

When Jesus spoke to His disciples in what became known as the Sermon on the Mount, He talked about the things that would bring them happiness and a sense of blessedness. He spoke about things such as persecution, meekness, mourning, and being poor in spirit. Jesus wasn't trying to be a killjoy. He simply wanted His disciples to understand that life in the Kingdom of God transcends the fleeting pleasures that may come with possessions or money or fame.

If Jesus were to be the keynote speaker at a principals' conference, I doubt if He would mention subjects like pedagogical theories, No Child Left Behind, achievement test scores, or new state guidelines. My guess is that He'd talk about the same things He did to His original disciples – things such as persecution, meekness, mourning, and being poor in spirit.

So, how does that translate into the way principals live their lives, especially in view of the fact that we have far more material blessings than the early believers, and we aren't subjected to the persecution that the early followers were?

Should we seek suffering for its own sake? Obviously not. It's wrong to think that the kingdom of God will come to us posthumously as a reward for depriving ourselves while on earth. There is no divine bonus for self-deprivation. Remember also that Jesus spoke in the present tense: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

If we're experiencing the kingdom of God right now,

how do we go about living a life consistent with Jesus' message?

I meet monthly with about a dozen other principals of Lutheran schools on the north and west sides of Chicago. The group is composed of veteran educators, folks who have been in the classrooms and school offices for decades. They're deeply involved in ministry. They work desperately to make their schools the best possible. Most are too seldom recognized for their accomplishments, but that doesn't seem to bother them. I doubt if any of them has a large bank account. Nor do I think they have many free hours among them. Their jobs consume them. I suspect that they are typical of Lutheran principals in other geographic areas as well.

The meetings occur after school. Each principal trudges into the meeting after a hectic, tiring day. But complaints are seldom heard. The conversations before, during, and after the meetings are usually upbeat. I'm not sure why, but perhaps it's because each realizes that indulging in self-pity is pointless. They enjoy humor, but it's not the goal of the group meetings. They're realists. They know they can't change the world, but they work hard to change their own corners of it. None of their schools are swimming in money. Some of the schools are on the brink of having to close.

The faces of the principals don't always tell what's going on inside. There is public laughter but private tears; public smiles but private nervousness; public strength but private vulnerabilities; public confidence but private doubt; public courage but private fears.

And there is faith – in themselves, their staffs, their mission, and primarily in their God. Their faith is both public and private. It's the source of their happiness. They realize that happiness is an "inside job." They realize that the words of the Psalmist, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life" is not an empty promise.

Nathaniel Hawthorne once observed, "Happiness is like a butterfly which, when pursued, is always beyond our grasp, but, if you will sit down quietly, may alight upon you."

I suppose that's true. Our overt, determined efforts to be happy result in disappointment. But our efforts to simply do the best we can in our schools, as God gives us the ability, are enough to help us realize how blessed we are. It's the journey, not only the destination, that brings happiness in the Lord. ***LEJ***

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# Today's Lutheran Educator... What do You Value

by Jonathan C. Laabs

Core Values. What do you value? Your immediate answer may well depend upon your circumstances, mood, or climate at the time of consideration. We all tend to focus upon those things which seem to take priority at the time and often fall into the trap of redefining our values as we go along. In fact, however, when we have identified those things on which we truly place our greatest value, we realize that those are the items in our lives that do not change at all. Our values help us to define what we do, which priorities to set, and how to accomplish our mission.

It is common for organizations (such as congregations and schools) to have set core values based upon an accepted mission statement. The answer to the question "What do we value?" at this level is easily answered through these statements. Critical targets, goals and objectives can be formed on the basis of several statements that are held near and dear to the organization and "owned" by its members, all focused clearly on the organization's mission.

Lutheran Education Association, through its board of directors, has recently adopted a new set of core values. Other LEA network leaders have also had a role in developing these statements, and they have been shared with members through the LEA web site. As this professional organization moves ahead into its next 65 years, we plan to serve educators in Lutheran ministries on the basis of the following mission statement and rooted in the following *new* core values. We value *your* involvement and support along the way.

**Mission Statement**

Lutheran Education Association is a professional organization linking, equipping and affirming educators in Lutheran ministries.

**Core Values: LEA is an organization that…**

*Is rooted in grace:* We believe, teach, and confess that salvation is received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We are firmly rooted in this Lutheran understanding of Scriptures and the Christian faith. "For it is by

grace you have been saved, through faith; and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**Serves Educators in Lutheran Ministries**

We are committed to serving and affirming Educators ministering in a broad spectrum of Lutheran Ministries. "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13).

**Links Partners in Ministry**

We enable, support and enhance the connecting links Educators in Lutheran Ministries have with one another as we minister to God's people together.

> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3:12-16)

**Equips for Excellence**

We promote the highest standards of professional excellence and innovative leadership development for Educators in Lutheran Ministries. "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things" (Philippians 4:8).

**Affirms Servant Leadership**

We affirm that Educators in Lutheran Ministries are servant leaders called to minister to God's people of every age and to be faithful to the command of Christ, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20).

**Gathers Educators Together**

We value gathering Educators in Lutheran Ministries together for fellowship, support, and celebration. "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20).

**Is Uniquely Placed for Advocacy**

We speak on behalf of Educators in Lutheran Ministries seeking to influence and inform others about issues affecting them and the institutions they serve. "Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:9). "Warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:14-18). ***LEJ***

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# Multiplying Ministries...Welcome to St. Arbucks

by Rich Bimler

No doubt you've noticed a new "worship center" on most every corner of most cities these days. It's called St. Arbucks, and it is growing stronger and making significant changes in America's lifestyle every day.

Remember the "good old days" when our lives centered around home, workplace, and church? In some cities, St. Arbucks has taken the place of church as a focal point and has become a gathering place for millions each day.

Check out these statistics: Starbucks opens an average of 6 new stores a day (2000 per year). From a base of 100 stores 15 years ago, it has emerged into a 13,000 store entity...and that's a lot of Lattes. It serves drinks in every state and in 37 countries; and you can find them in airports, strip malls, hospitals, libraries, and even churches. Starbucks has 40 million loyal customers per week, the average customer visiting the chain 18 times a month. And I must confess that I personally help to raise that average daily.

Researchers are saying that St. Arbucks is filling America's need for a public gathering place. Starbucks is not just another coffee shop; it is a life-style, a place for bringing people together through the social glue of coffee. Starbucks decided early on that they were not a coffee company serving people, but a people company serving coffee. People just don't come to Starbucks for coffee; they come for the "Starbucks Experience." I recently read this saying on a Starbuck's pastry bag: "Starbucks ...flavors my senses, sweetens my disposition, stirs my imagination, and nourishes my dreams." Now you may be wondering why I am reading pastry bags, but the point is that Starbucks has branded themselves as a place to experience dreams, hopes, warmth, relationships, values, affirmation. Yow, that sounds like things the Church is all about.

And that is the whole point of this article. Whether we like the "Starbucks Experience" or not, the point is that Starbucks is helping us see how important it is to be engrossed in a brand that promotes and produces quality,

core values, forgiveness, God's grace, hope, joy and service to others. Starbucks helps us to see what people are looking for: acceptance, a place to belong, positive experiences, hope in a world that gives little hope. No need for us Lutheran educators to get all upset and panic over the Starbucks phenomenon. Rather, let's learn from them and see how many of these values can be expanded, taught and caught more intentionally at church and at school.

The bottom line is simply this: The purpose St. Arbucks is not to proclaim the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is our job ...and our joy. Nor is it to teach our children and adults Christian values of God's forgiveness and love in the Lord. Let them continue to expand their "Starbucks Experience." And let us continue to proclaim and teach and live out our lives of sharing the "Christ Experience" with others. I am not ready to let Starbucks take over the role and place of the Church in society. We, the Church, are still the Community of Saints, through Word and Sacrament. We are still the Holy Huddle, the Grace Place, the Shalom Zone, the Friendly Flock. Never, ever will the Bread and Wine be taken over by a grande and a cinnamon scone.

So enjoy the "Starbucks Experience." I do. I like to meet people there (free office space). I like to observe people there. I like the aroma of the place. However, let each of us also continue to celebrate the "Christ Experience" that is happening in us and through us each day. Share our experiences of hope and joy and peace in the Lord. And let us learn from Starbucks how we can do our ministry better, how we can "brand" our school and youth ministry more effectively, how we can meet people where they are in life, and bring them to worship and nurture in our congregations and schools.

And, who knows, that faith journey just might take us through one of the thousands of Starbucks all around us. And, if so, enjoy the experience. And share your faith while you're at it.

For Further Reading Enjoyment (with your Starbucks, of course): The Gospel According to Starbucks, Leonard Sweet, 2007, Waterbrook Press The Starbucks Experience, Joseph Michelli, 2007, McGraw-Hill; How Starbucks Saved My Life, Michael Gill, 2007, Gotham Books. ***LEJ***

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